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CLASSICAL CLUBS FOR SECONDARY-SCHOOL TEACHERS¹

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It is a familiar fact to those of us who are engaged in teaching in High Schools and Academies that the demands upon our time are great and that it is a difficult matter to unite for purposes of profitable study. The hours of teaching are many and the work outside of school necessary for the proper preparation of lessons, for giving assistance to pupils, and for correction of written work, makes a perpetual drain upon the energies of the conscientious teacher. The necessary social activities also cannot be neglected; for the teacher must be alive to what is going on in the community and must not become a mere bookworm, if he is to stand among his fellow-citizens in the places where every teacher ought to stand.

How then can time be secured for study and reading along classical lines by a teacher who feels perhaps already overburdened? So far as private study is concerned, each one can solve the problem to suit his or her own individual needs. The situation which I have in mind is where two or more unite for mutual profit. That this can be done, I am sure; for it has been done with numbers varying from two to more than a dozen.

One of the pleasantest recollections of my early years in teaching is the reading of the whole of Horace with a fellow-teacher. We regularly devoted the hour before supper through the winter season to this pleasure. This could easily be done, as we boarded at the same place. In reading and translating we each took our turn. When an ode, for example, had been translated by one, it was immediately retranslated by the other. To secure fairness, the first reading was done alternately. In this way each had read aloud to the other the whole of the poet, when we had completed our reading. Two associates who live near one another can secure much enjoyment as

¹ Read before the Classical Association of New England, Boston, 1909.

well as profit by such an arrangement. To accomplish results, only very unusual occurrences should be allowed to interrupt the regularity of the engagement. Except in the smallest schools it should be possible to find two at least who can unite in this way.

My real reason, however, for preparing this paper was to show what may be done in schools where there are from ten to twenty-five or more teachers, by telling what has been done in the school with which I am connected. In November, 1891, a Latin club, composed of all who taught Latin in the school, was organized. The reason for it was this. A recent graduate from college had been a substitute the preceding year for an old and experienced teacher of the more advanced classes. In the course of his work he had had difficulty in ascertaining what parts of syntax his pupils should be expected to know and what parts he ought to teach them. Membership in the club was obligatory and it was expected that all would be regular in attendance. The aim in view was to go through the Latin grammar carefully and to mark by means of the four letters, α , β , γ , δ , the portions to be learned during each of the four years. Thus at the beginning of the Senior year it could be assumed that a pupil had been taught all parts of the grammar, marked α , β , γ . At least twelve meetings were held before summer, all spent in this way.

It is unnecessary to say that this work was very dry, and on assembling in the autumn of 1892 the monotony was relieved somewhat by a new feature. Two teachers were appointed for each meeting to prepare carefully a certain amount of Latin for quantitative reading aloud. This method of pronunciation had recently been adopted and such practice was felt to be eminently helpful.

Two years were spent thus. By this time all had become thoroughly tired of what was practically all work and no play; so in the fall of 1893 an entirely different programme was planned. Fourteen meetings were held from October to May, and selections from Horace's Odes, Epistles, Satires, and the *Ars Poetica* were read. Each member was responsible for the entire translation at one meeting and was also required to present one carefully written paper during the year upon some topic previously assigned. Essays upon the following subjects were read in the course of the year: "The Life and Character of Horace;" "Julius Caesar as a Soldier;" "Essentials of Prosody

to be Taught Classes in Virgil;" "The Fifth Satire of Book I;" "Conditional and Temporal Clauses in Latin;" "The Roman Religion;" "Friendships of Horace;" "Dido;" "Turnus;" "Virgil as a Plagiarist;" "Everyday Life of a Wealthy Roman as Illustrated by Horace;" "Virgil's Prayers and Similes Compared with Those of Homer;" "Roman Houses and Their Furnishings;" "Virgil in Later Poets." This year proved to be very successful in arousing the interest of the members.

The programme for 1894-95 was varied somewhat. Many of the letters of Pliny the Younger were read, but regular lessons were now assigned and each person took part in the reading at every meeting. The last part of the year portions of Catullus and Propertius were read. At five of the meetings a portion of the time was devoted to discussion of that part of the Committee of Ten's report which dealt with Latin, and at two others problems connected with the first- and second-year work were taken up. Each discussion was led by two teachers previously appointed.

In 1895-96 extracts from Tibullus, Lucan, and Aulus Gellius formed the subject of the reading, and some topic suggested at one meeting was discussed at the next. In 1896-97 selections from Ovid and Lucretius were read. This finished Crowell's *Selections from Latin Poets*, which had been used as the text of the poetry studied. During the remainder of the year the whole of Peck and Arrowsmith's *Roman Life* was gone over and discussions were continued, four teachers being appointed to be ready at each meeting. The membership of the club reached its maximum limit about this time. Ten women and seven men were connected with it, though all were not constant attendants. Three of these came from the English High School.

In 1897-98 the *Trinummus* of Plautus and the *Dialogus de oratoribus* of Tacitus were the subjects chosen for reading, and at each meeting special studies, prepared by two members, were presented. These studies were based on the lesson of the day or upon any matter, biographical, historical, philological, or critical in which the member was interested.

The reading of the *Dialogus* naturally led to Cicero's *Brutus*, which was the subject of the club's work in 1898-99. Two critics were appointed for each meeting.

For two years the number of the meetings had been reduced from fourteen to twelve, and in 1899-1900 a still further reduction was made. Only six meetings were held and these were devoted to further readings in Horace.

The formal meetings of the club then ceased, and it had apparently died a natural death. There were, however, among its members those who had enjoyed the readings sufficiently to wish to continue the work, but upon somewhat different lines. Accordingly in the autumn of 1903 the following note was sent around among the teachers in the school: "Teachers who feel inclined will begin Caesar's *Bellum civile* at 2:30 P. M. in Room 22. No previous preparation is needed, since it is intended as practice in sight reading." In response to this notice seven teachers appeared.

Thus after a three-years' rest the club again became active. All formality was abandoned and the following mode of procedure, which is still in vogue, was adopted. Each member in turn reads aloud a sentence in the Latin and then renders it into English. The first period has become the regular stopping-place, whether the amount read be a line or half a page.

In its original condition the club met twice a month and the meetings lasted for an hour and a half. Since its revival the meetings occur regularly on Monday, when the school is in session, except that the second Monday of the month is pre-empted by the Greek Club. They continue for one hour. Meetings are occasionally omitted by common agreement, so that the number varies in different years; for instance, twenty-one meetings were held in 1906-7; fourteen in 1907-8; and seventeen so far (April) the present year.

In 1903-4 the *Civil War* was read through between September 14 and May 23.

The following year Sallust's *Jugurtha* was begun in September and finished in March.

In 1905-6 Tyrrell's edition of *Cicero in His Letters* was read. This was not finished until the last Monday in June.

In 1906 Burton's *Selections from Livy* were begun and the reading was carried on through 1907-8 until it was finished about the first of February, 1909.

The club is now reading Aulus Gellius again, as this author was

by no means exhausted in the readings of a few years ago. The membership of the club this year has consisted of two men and six women.

The success of the Latin Club led to the formation of a Greek Club in December, 1893. As the Latin Club then met twice a month, it was felt that it was not wise to have more than one meeting a month devoted to Greek, and the second Monday was chosen. At first eight meetings were held from October to May inclusive, but before long the May meeting was given up. These meetings have been held in a small room of the Public Library, where reference books are readily accessible. The Latin Club during its period of more formal meetings met in the same place. The sessions have regularly begun soon after four o'clock and continue from an hour to an hour and a half.

The membership was at first confined to teachers in the school, and at the beginning five men and five women were enrolled. When it was discovered three years later that two grammar masters were fond of reading Greek together, they were at once invited to join, and ever since any who were interested have been gladly enrolled. Thus others than teachers have at times been members. The numbers at the meetings have varied from two to about twelve.

During the winter and spring of 1894 the *Alcestis* of Euripides was read. In the following year the *Antigone* of Sophocles and Book xviii of the *Iliad* were taken up. In 1895-96 the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides was read and in connection therewith one of the club read to the rest at each meeting a version of Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* that the difference between the ancient and modern treatment of the theme might be vividly brought out.

In 1896-97 the subject selected for the main reading was another drama of Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis*. In addition for collateral work six other plays relating to the Pelopid family, the *Agamemnon*, *Choëphori*, and *Eumenides* of Aeschylus; the *Electra* of Sophocles, and the *Electra* and *Orestes* of Euripides were assigned to groups of two persons each who were to read these in the original and present a report, accompanied by translations of extracts suitable for illustrating the spirit of the plays.

In 1897-98 one of the most enjoyable of all the programmes was

carried out. The *Bacchae* of Euripides was selected and the subject of the Bacchic myth was taken up by a paper or discussion at each meeting. The following topics were treated: "The Dionysus Myth in Its Accepted Classical Form;" "Origins of the Dionysus Cult;" "Local Variations of the Cult;" "Dionysiac Festivals;" "Dionysus in Art;" "Dionysus in Literature;" "The Spiritual Significance of the Dionysus Myth."

In 1898-99 nine of Pindar's Olympian and Pythian Odes were read and the following subjects discussed: "Olympic Games;" "Different Forms of the Demeter and Persephone Myth;" "Eleusis;" "Relation of Dionysus to Demeter and Persephone;" "Relation of Dionysus to Apollo;" "Demeter and Persephone in Art;" "Ideas of Pindar in Regard to a Future Life Taken in Connection with Previous Beliefs."

In 1899-1900 eleven Idyls of Theocritus were read and the "Greek Vase and Its Ornamentation" were studied by topics. Through the kindness of one of the club members, who was an expert amateur photographer, blue prints of vases, copied from various sources, were supplied at cost. The topics taken up were the following, each one being assigned to two members: "Early Ceramic Attempts and Geometric Ornamentation;" "Oriental Influences;" "Black-figured Vases;" "Red-figured Vases: Euphronios, Sosias, and Brygos;" "Red-figured Vases: Pamphaios, Macron, and Hieron;" "White Attic Lekythi;" "Vases of Macedonian Epoch."

In 1900-1 Plato's *Phaedo* was the subject selected for reading and the following topics were discussed: "Early Greek Thought: Nature and Law;" "Socrates and the Sophists;" "Democritus and Plato: Materialism and Idealism;" "Aristotle: His Systematic Philosophy." Other topics assigned were not presented. This year's programme proved too ambitious and required more time of the members than they were willing on the whole to give. Accordingly the faithful four who attended the last meeting voted to offer an easy programme for the next year. Homer was the author chosen. So in 1901-2 three books of the *Odyssey*, iv, vi, vii, were read, and the club regained its former size.

In 1902-3 the drama was taken up again, and the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus was the play studied.

In 1903-4 the *Persians* of the same author was read. This led naturally to the story of the Persian Wars in Herodotus in 1904-5.

Since that time the club has remained constant to the drama and in successive years the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the *Oedipus at Colonus* and the *Ajax* of Sophocles have been read. During the present year the club has returned to Euripides and with an average attendance of seven has been enjoying the reading of the *Hippolytus*.

After an existence of over fifteen years both clubs are in a healthy and vigorous condition, though the Latin Club, as has already been stated, was in a state of suspended animation for three years. Present indications seem to point to a prosperous future.

Someone may ask what have been the underlying causes for such success as has been attained. In my opinion the unflagging devotion and interest shown by a few in the Greek Club and a somewhat larger number in the Latin Club are the elements which have kept the clubs alive, for thus a nucleus has been formed about which the less enthusiastic members could gather. The time spent in such work as has been outlined bears good fruit in keeping alive the teacher's interest in the classics and in preventing that deadening of the faculties which is so likely to occur when Caesar, Cicero, and Virgil, all in small doses, are gone over year after year in a monotonous routine. Of course the wide-awake teacher will pursue studies of his own, but after all the human being is naturally a social animal and some reading together of the great writers for purely literary enjoyment will prove an agreeable change from "Quae cum ita sint," or "ἐντεῦθεν ἐξελαύνει."

As long as colleges persist in demanding certain fixed amounts of reading preparatory to admission instead of testing a candidate's power over a language by his ability to handle with substantial accuracy a passage of prose or poetry never before seen, so long will such clubs as have been described prove an oasis in the desert to secondary-school teachers.